

WWT Malvern Group

Thursday November 6<sup>th</sup>

UK Marine Life, with Dr Peter Richardson and Sharon Thomas, from the Marine Conservation Society

Sharon Thomas is a Sea Champion (a volunteer for the MCS) and she began the evening with a thought-provoking summary of the challenges of marine conservation. We live on an island, and we have more than 11,000 miles of coastline to look after. We have basking sharks, turtles, a third of the world's grey seals, 23 species of whale and dolphin, corals, sponges and maerl beds. We have Marine Protected Areas including Lundy Island, but we need many more, and the MCS is campaigning for them. The charity works with children through the Cool Seas Roadshow, removes litter from our beaches, and campaigns for sustainable fishing.



Loggerhead Turtle Peter Richardson



Pink sea fan Chris Wood

Dr Peter Richardson talked about the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List of threatened species, giving examples of UK marine species at each level. The short-snouted seahorse and Atlantic puffin are of 'Least Concern' although the numbers are rapidly dropping. Harbour seals, European otters, leatherback turtles, basking sharks and sperm whales are even more at risk. Loggerhead turtles, halibut and sei whale are 'Vulnerable'. There are currently five 'Critically Endangered' species including skate, angel shark and European eel. The message is clear: pollution (especially plastics), over-fishing, habitat damage and bycatch are taking a terrible toll on our native marine life.

There are simple ways we can all help straight away: don't drop litter, and use your own non-plastic shopping bags. Buy fish which is sustainable (see FishOnline on the MCS website.)

The next meeting is at 7.30 pm on December 4<sup>th</sup> at the Lyttelton Rooms, Church St, Malvern. Bill Francis, a volunteer at Slimbridge, will give a talk entitled “From Crested Screamers to Spoon-billed Sandpipers”, describing the ongoing work of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, including the protecting and monitoring of some endangered species.

Alison Uren